

**Evergreen Fire District
Board of Trustees
Meeting
Meeting Minutes
Regular Board Meeting of January 4th, 2021 – 6:00 pm**

To Be Held Remotely via Google Meet:

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For public comment please email Board Chairman Brodie Verworn @ brodie@vitalogyeducation.com

CALL MEETING TO ORDER:

Chairman Verworn calls the meeting to order at 6:05 pm

TRUSTEES PRESENT:

Brockman, Connolly, DePaul (present via internet)
Verworn and Fallon (present at Station 81)

RECOGNIZE PUBLIC/STAFF IN ATTENDANCE:

Chief Williams (present at the station)

PUBLIC COMMENT:

At this time, public may comment on any public matter that is not on the Agenda of the Meeting and that is within the jurisdiction of the District.

(no public comment has been emailed to Chairman Verworn)

FINANCIALS:

Approve November financials

Fallon states he is okay with the financials and regarding 7207 (hydrant account) with currently \$40,000 and a budgeted line item of \$18,000 to transfer to 7250 (CIP). He suggests getting the funds transferred 'sooner than later so that it isn't forgotten about. Fallon states in regard to the financials; the profit and loss for EMS and Fire combined is important to determine what the total income and expenditures and net income are at the end of each year in comparison. The important parts of the individual sheets for Fire and for EMS are the expenditures and to see how they are tracking from one year to the next to see where the increased expenditures are and to understand why the increase(s) occurs and gives the example of the payroll expense.

Motion; Fallon to approve checks written from each account and accept the reconciliation statements and financial statements for November 2020; Second; Brockman; motion passes unanimously.

Motion; Fallon to transfer \$18,000 from 7207 to 7250; Second; Connolly; motion passes unanimously).

PAST ITEMS/UPDATES:

1. Approve meeting minutes of December 7th, 2020

Chairman Verworn asks if an amount (\$58,000) that was provided by Chief Williams in regard to the recent audit was incorrect and needs to be changed. Chief Williams states it was correct at the time but additional information was received and the current correct number is \$78,000. Fallon suggest addressing the difference in a separate motion as to what the disposition should be and can be discussed at the next meeting in February with a proposal on how it is to be corrected.

Motion; Brockman to accept the minutes as presented; Second; DePaul; motion passes unanimously.

2. Update on employee manual

Chief Williams states the attorney has been on vacation and the only thing to report is that he sent her an email this morning with an additional (8) policy and procedure revisions she will need to review. He states some are due to the recent laws that were passed and started in January of the 2021; such as the legalization of marijuana and how it applies to the workplace and etc. He states that approximately 1/3 of the District's policy guide is being revised and is kind of 'slow going' and that some of the revisions may be out of her scope and require another attorney in the law firm with a specific expertise to revise it. Brockman asks what the recreational marijuana policy is and if the minimum wage increase impacts personnel. Chief Williams states the increase does not impact personnel and that everyone is already above minimum wage and has been for a while. Chief Williams states while marijuana is legal at the state level it is still illegal at the federal level and the District does received federal funding and that the states is looking at 6 of the classifications on the federal side; primarily transport (CDL and transportation services) or any industries deemed 'hazardous' which does not include FIRE/EMS. Chief Williams states that to answer the question there is a "zero tolerance" policy and is treated the same as alcohol in not being permitted at the facility or on any District property (including vehicles) etc. What he is looking at is an educational component (training) to be able to determine 'being under the influence' (in the workplace) to legally satisfy termination of employment. Chief Williams states the main concern in FIRE/EMS regarding insurance companies is currently sleep deprivation caused accidents and number of shifts people are working. Chief Williams states he is currently vetting a cell phone application similarly used by law enforcement to determine cognitive function ability as well as a saliva test implemented by Highway Patrol to determine marijuana impairment. Both tests are inexpensive and provide results in 5 minutes.

Chairman Verworn asks if there is any case law on mandating the Covid vaccine. Chief Williams states that employers have the right to mandate a vaccine as a condition of employment but has not really been challenged. He states many industries are going to move in that direction; primarily hospitals and rest homes but nothing within the State of Montana or Flathead County that would force making the vaccine mandatory but will let Trustees know if that changes.

Verworn asks if there is anything in the manual addressing who is held responsible when there is an outstanding number of unfinished reports; such as in the event an individual's employment is terminated and has multiple unfinished run reports. Chief Williams states there are officers assigned to oversee the reports but have several other roles and responsibilities. The recent problem had originated not from reports being overlooked but that the missing reports were never assigned and the actual report(s) was not initiated in Emergency Reporting. Chief Williams states the issue was addressed in the officers meeting earlier today.

3. Fire Chief Purchasing Authorization

Brockman states that he and Trustee Connolly are continuing to work on this item from the last meeting.

NEW ITEMS:

1. Auditor RFP Discussion

Chief Williams states he had addressed this in an email update he sent out to try to condense the meeting for this evening. He states he has moved forward and had Cheri send out an RFP to several of the audit companies that were listed on the website and that the last 3 audits are available electronically.

PROPOSALS:

IFT Hourly Position

Chief Williams states this item is mostly informational. He states he has shared with the Board some of the struggles that are currently happening with the inter-facility program; it's 'booming' and EFD is having to turn down IFT transports. He states adequate staffing was added but could always use more but 'holding our own'. He states he believes the issue to be the 45 minutes mark of getting personnel to the station. He reminds Trustees that people responding from home cannot be required to respond to the station within any time frame less than 45 minutes (IRS rule) resulting in missed transports. He states the District is receiving more urgent transport requests from North Valley (pays higher due to being critical care) but that it is a struggle getting personnel in more quickly. Currently being considered is the conversion of payment on IFT mileage vs. rolling personnel over to an hourly component which would then take away the IRS rule (due to not having to pay pager pay and not at home waiting). There would be no change in classification; only change would be the method of payment. He recognizes that if full time inter-facility personnel are brought on, it would be a 6 month temporary position which will not include benefits being offered. He states he is working with the attorney on coding those positions with a different classification that would allow the District the flexibility to offer benefits similar to the hourly shift personnel or is the District forced to offer benefits and if so, what are the implications of cost. He states if benefits were offered and they were employed 24/7 it would be a 'stretch to financially support it with the IFT's.' (*Chief Williams included in the packets a spread sheet of what is currently being paid vs. what is being proposed to pay.*) He states that currently IFT personnel are being paid \$5.00 an hour to stay at home on standby with the expectation of arriving no sooner than 45 minutes. He states over the past 12 months, \$128,557 has been paid out in inter-facility mileage to those participants and additionally paid out \$55,140 to personnel utilizing the pager pay for a total of \$183,000. He states 24 hour coverage is being considered consisting of 1 basic and 1 paramedic on-shift, 24/7 with a total of \$262,000 (no benefits). If the position was approved by the Board, it would be only half of the \$262,000 (\$131,000) because it is a 6 month trial period. It was also considered at being a 12 hour shift rather than 24 hours; an individual would come in at 7 am and leave at 7 pm. That person would be at the station on an hourly basis and be able to pick up many of the urgent IFT transports. After 7 pm, that hourly position would revert back to pager pay and mileage. Chief Williams clarifies this would not be a new position for 8 people; the personnel already exist. Chief Williams states that over the past couple of months, tracking data has not been collected for every missed IFT transport so he doesn't have that to present but should have some data in the next 30 days. It is being reported to him that a lot of the misses happen in the evening with helicopter and flight crews coming in to GPIA in the middle of the night with COVID patients. Chief Williams states the pros far outweigh the cons of paying IFT personnel hourly because when the coverage is no longer needed, the program reverts back to the pager pay/mileage structure. The only thing that would keep him from moving forward with the 'proposal' is if benefits have to be included. Verworn asks if there has been an increase in compensation for when a flight crew has to be picked up or for 'hazard' pay (such as COVID) or if it has remained unchanged. Chief Williams states that there has been an increase in 'hazard' pay for transporting COVID + patients but on a mileage basis. Verworn clarifies and states his question is in regard to insurances and Chief Williams states that there has not. Verworn asks if there is any incentive for personnel to receive the COVID vaccination. Chief Williams states he will not personally mandate a vaccination unless he is forced to do so. He asks what the incentive would be to personnel to go get the vaccine and still be required to wear a mask and follow all precautions. There is no data yet to determine if an individual is safe or not against COVID after receiving the vaccine. He states that to offer a bonus or incentive for personnel to get the vaccine would not be well received by the majority of personnel. Chief Williams states a survey was taken (by Survey Monkey) regarding the vaccination and personnel willingness to receive it. EFD scored low (2nd lowest in Flathead County) in terms of response to the survey and extremely low in the willingness of personnel to receive the vaccination. Chief Williams states that only 4 out of 48 personnel has received the vaccination and he doesn't expect that number to change until more data is available regarding the effectiveness and the potential long-term side effects. Fallon asks why the Board shouldn't identify a

policy. Chief Williams states because the Board would then be entering Fire Department Operations. Fallon disagrees and asks how it is interfering with Operations if the Board implements a policy stating, at the minimum, a surgical mask or equivalent should be worn. Chief Williams states it would be a policy that is developed operationally that the Board would have to approve. Chief Williams states he appreciates the Board be willing to take the responsibility but if he has the struggle that is currently occurring with personnel as their Chief that it was not going to change things if the Board implements the policy because he is the one that would still have to implement it. DePaul asks if people are still applying to work at EFD and Chief Williams states there have been 4 new volunteers brought on within the past 2 weeks and expecting to bring on at least a couple more due to 5 personnel not meeting their minimums for 2020 in terms of training and call volume which is policy that has been in place for awhile.

RESOLUTIONS:

(none)

CHIEF'S REPORT:

1. November 2020 Call Volume

- A) Comparison Incident Count by Weekday/Hour (all zones) for November 2020**
- B) Comparison Incident Statistics for November 2020**

November 2020 shows 304 calls 2019 was 256 calls. The difference is in the IFT calls with 152 in November 2020 vs. 121 calls this time last year in 2019. Year to date (Jan 1 through Nov 30) in 2019 was 2,831 calls vs. 3,188 in 2020. December was extremely busy and the year ended with 3515 calls for 2020 vs. 3099 in 2019. In 2,018 there were 2905 calls. Chief Williams states the significant increase continues but not sure on how much of it is due to Covid yet. He states he does anticipate a slight decline in IFT's in 6 to 8 months due to a lot of them are Covid related.

Adjourn 7:40 pm

The President of the Board of Trustees, as presiding officer of any meeting of the Board of Trustees, may close the meeting during the time the discussion relates to a matter of individual privacy; and, then, if, and only if, the presiding officer determines that the demands of individual privacy clearly exceed the merits of public disclosure. The right of individual privacy may be waived by the individual about whom the discussion pertains; and, in that event, the meeting must be open.

Chairman Brodie Verworn or Vice Chair Randy DePaul

Secretary Tony Brockman